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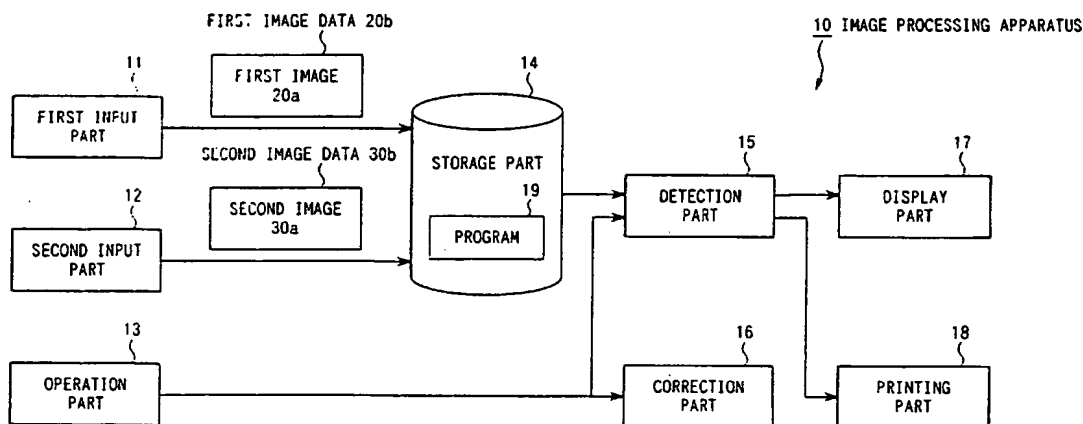
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(54) Title: IMAGE PROCESSING METHOD, IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND PROGRAM



(57) Abstract: The conventional correction method had a problem that when the color correction or color matching was made between two images, it was difficult to match the color of two images. An image processing method of the present invention comprises a detection step of detecting a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image, and a correction step of correcting the first plurality of colors or the second plurality of colors in accordance with the correspondence.

DESCRIPTION

IMAGE PROCESSING METHOD, IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND
PROGRAM

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Technical Field

The present invention relates to an image processing
method, an image processing apparatus using the method, and
an image processing program for causing a computer to perform
10 the method.

Background Art

Conventionally, in photographing the same subject under
different conditions, an image of different color tone may
15 be produced from data of the photographed result depending
on the condition, whereby the technical operator performs
an image processing for matching the subject color of plural
images by operating the image processing software.

One of such conventional techniques involves picking
20 up the image of the same subject employing the apparatuses
that are different in the photographing environments and
photographing characteristics, for example, a scanner and
a digital camera, and making the correction to match the color
of both images which may be different due to differences in
25 the photographing environments and characteristics.

JP7-121681A disclosed the technique relating to the

correction, and JP9-147098A disclosed the technique relating to the correction of tint for one image.

Also, the conventional image processing apparatus as described in JP9-298657A performs an image processing method
5 of correcting plural images for color tone, based on the parameters for changing the color tone which are manually inputted by the operator, to match the color tone for plural images having different color tone.

However, with the correction techniques as described
10 in JP7-121681A and JP9-147098A, though the color correction or color matching is made between two images, it was difficult to match the color of two images.

Also, in the image processing apparatus as described in JP9-298657A, there was a problem that the general user
15 having no specialized experience or technique for the operation was not easy to match the color tone, since the operator must have some skills to correct objectively or match the color tone by operating the parameters.

20 Disclosure of the Invention

(Form 1) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing method of form 1 comprises a detection step of detecting a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of
25 a second plurality of colors in a second image, and a correction step of correcting the first plurality of colors or the second plurality of colors in accordance with the correspondence.

Since the image processing method of form 1 comprises the detection step of detecting a correspondence between the former one color and the latter one color, and the correction step of correcting one of the first plurality of colors and
5 the second plurality of colors in accordance with the correspondence, it is possible to easily match the plurality of colors on one side with the plurality of colors on the other side.

(Form 2) Further, the image processing method of form
10 2 is the image processing method according to form 1, wherein the detection step comprises detecting a plurality of correspondences between a first plurality of feature colors and a second plurality of feature colors by extracting the first plurality of feature colors featuring the first image
15 from the first image and extracting the second plurality of feature colors featuring the second image from the second image.

With the image processing method of form 1 or 2, when the color of the first image and the color of the second image
20 are not slid evenly on the color space, for example, it is possible to correct the color of image by specifying plural sets of correspondent color in view of a slide in the color between both images.

(Form 3) Further, the image processing method of form
25 3 is the image processing method according to form 2, wherein the detection step comprises making a first decision of deciding the first plurality of feature colors in accordance

with the extent of appearance of the first plurality of colors, and making a second decision of deciding the second plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of the second plurality of colors.

5 (Form 4) Further, the image processing method of form 4 is the image processing method according to form 3, wherein the detection step comprises making the first decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a third plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among
10 the first plurality of colors, and making the second decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a fourth plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among the second plurality of colors.

Since the image processing method of form 3 or 4 handles
15 the colors alone having the appearance frequency greater than a certain threshold, it is possible to simplify the processing.

(Form 5) Further, the image processing method of form 5 is the image processing method according to form 3, wherein the detection step comprises detecting the plurality of
20 correspondences so that a sum of color differences between the feature colors corresponding to each other may be minimized for possible combinations of the first plurality of feature colors and the second plurality of feature colors.

With the image processing method of form 5, it is possible
25 to automatically associate the feature colors based on a sum of color differences between feature colors.

(Form 6) Further, the image processing method of form 6 is the image processing method according to form 5, wherein the detection step comprises weighting the color differences and the extents of appearance, and calculating a weighted
5 sum of color differences and a weighted sum of extents of appearance.

With the image processing method of form 6, it is possible to improve the precision of correspondence by adjusting the weights of color difference and appearance frequency.

10 (Form 7) Further, the image processing method of form 7 is the image processing method according to form 2, wherein the detection step comprises detecting the plurality of correspondences by pattern matching of the color histogram.

With the image processing method of form 7, it is possible
15 to reduce the error of correspondence, because the optimal correspondence is made over the histogram.

(Form 8) Further, the image processing method of form 8 is the image processing method according to form 1, wherein the correction step comprises correcting the other colors
20 with reference to one of the first plurality of colors and the second plurality of colors.

(Form 9) Further, the image processing method of form 9 is the image processing method according to form 1, wherein the correction step comprises correcting at least one of hue,
25 saturation and lightness based on a color specification system of hue, saturation and lightness.

With the image processing method of form 8 or 9, when an image of the clothes is picked up by the digital camera, for example, it is possible to perform the correction processing in an appropriate color specification system depending on the processing object, without correcting the lightness strongly related with the shading, and by correcting only the hue and saturation strongly related with the tint, because the shading of clothes in the image is important as the information indicating solidness.

10 (Form 10) Further, the image processing method of form 10 is the image processing method according to form 2, wherein the correction step comprises extracting the feature colors based on a predetermined domain, or a domain specified by the user.

15 With the image processing method of form 10, since the correction processing is made for the specified domain, it is possible to eliminate the influence of the image domain such as the background irrelevant with the subject on the image domain of the subject by specifying the image domain of the subject to be corrected, and optimally correct the image domain of the subject to be corrected.

25 (Form 11) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing apparatus of form 11 comprises a detection part of detecting a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image, and a correction

part of correcting the first plurality of colors or the second plurality of colors in accordance with the correspondence.

(Form 12) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 12 is the image processing apparatus according to form 11, further comprising a first input part for inputting the first image, and a second input part for inputting the second image.

(Form 13) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 13 is the image processing apparatus according to form 12, wherein the first input part is one of a scanner and a digital camera, and the second input part is the other of the scanner and the digital camera.

(Form 14) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 14 is the image processing apparatus according to form 11, wherein the correction part corrects the other colors with reference to one of the first plurality of colors and the second plurality of colors.

(Form 15) The image processing apparatus of form 15 is the image processing apparatus according to form 11, wherein the correction part corrects at least one of hue, saturation and lightness based on a color specification system of the hue, the saturation and the lightness.

(Form 16) The image processing apparatus of form 16 is the image processing apparatus according to form 11, wherein the detection part extracts the feature colors based on a predetermined range or a range specified by the user.

(Form 17) The image processing apparatus of form 17 is the image processing apparatus according to form 11, wherein the detection part detects a plurality of correspondences between a first plurality of feature colors and a second plurality of feature colors by extracting the first plurality of feature colors featuring the first image from the first image and extracting the second plurality of feature colors featuring the second image from the second image.

(Form 18) The image processing apparatus of form 18 is the image processing method according to form 17, wherein the detection part makes a first decision of deciding the first plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of the first plurality of colors, and makes a second decision of deciding the second plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of the second plurality of colors.

(Form 19) The image processing apparatus of form 19 is the image processing apparatus according to form 18, wherein the detection part makes the first decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a third plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among the first plurality of colors, and makes the second decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a fourth plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among the second plurality of colors.

(Form 20) The image processing apparatus of form 20 is the image processing apparatus according to form 18, wherein

the detection part detects the plurality of correspondences so that a sum of color differences between the feature colors corresponding to each other may be minimized for possible combinations of the first plurality of feature colors and the second plurality of feature colors.

(Form 21) The image processing apparatus of form 21 is the image processing apparatus according to form 20, wherein the detection part weights the color differences and the extents of appearance, and calculates a weighted sum of color differences and a weighted sum of extents of appearance.

(Form 22) The image processing apparatus of form 22 is the image processing apparatus according to form 17, wherein the detection part detects the plurality of correspondences by pattern matching of the color histogram.

(Form 23) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing program of form 23 is the image processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, the computer having a detection part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing, wherein the program comprises a detection step of causing the detection part to detect a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image, and a correction step of causing the correction part to correct the first plurality of colors or the second plurality of colors in accordance with the correspondence.

(Form 24) Further, the image processing program of form 24 is the image processing program according to form 23, wherein the detection step comprises detecting a plurality of correspondences between a first plurality of feature colors and a second plurality of feature colors by extracting the first plurality of feature colors featuring the first image from the first image and extracting the second plurality of feature colors featuring the second image from the second image.

10 (Form 25) Further, the image processing program of form 25 is the image processing program according to form 24, wherein the detection step comprises making a first decision of deciding the first plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of the first plurality of colors, and making a second decision of deciding the second plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of the second plurality of colors.

(Form 26) Further, the image processing program of form 26 is the image processing program according to form 25, wherein the detection step comprises making the first decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a third plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among the first plurality of colors, and making the second decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a fourth plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among the second plurality of colors.

(Form 27) Further, the image processing program of form 27 is the image processing program according to form 25, wherein the detection step comprises detecting the plurality of correspondences so that a sum of color differences between the feature colors corresponding to each other may be minimized for possible combinations of the first plurality of feature colors and the second plurality of feature colors.

(Form 28) Further, the image processing program of form 28 is the image processing program according to form 27, wherein the detection step comprises weighting the color differences and the extents of appearance, and calculating a weighted sum of color differences and a weighted sum of extents of appearance.

(Form 29) Further, the image processing program of form 29 is the image processing program according to form 24, wherein the detection step comprises detecting the plurality of correspondences by pattern matching of the color histogram.

(Form 30) Further, the image processing program of form 30 is the image processing program according to form 23, wherein the correction step comprises correcting the other colors with reference to one of the first plurality of colors and the second plurality of colors.

(Form 31) Further, the image processing program of form 31 is the image processing program according to form 23, wherein the correction step comprises correcting at least one of hue, saturation and lightness based on a color specification system of hue, saturation and lightness.

(Form 32) Further, the image processing program of form 32 is the image processing program according to form 24, wherein the detection step comprises extracting the feature colors based on a predetermined domain, or a domain specified by the user.

(Form 33) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, a computer readable storage medium of form 33 storing an image processing program is the computer readable storage medium storing the image processing program according to any one of forms 23 to 32.

Thereby, the same action and effect are attained as the image processing program according to any one of forms 23 to 32, and the image processing program is easily delivered or received via a recording medium such as CD-ROM or DVD-ROM MO.

(Form 34) Also, in order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing method of form 34 comprises a specification step of specifying the color in each of two images, and a correction step of correcting the other color in one image in accordance with the relationship between both the colors.

With the image processing method of form 34, since the correction step comprises correcting the other color in accordance with the relationship between both the colors specified at the specification step, it is possible to correct the one image without requiring the technical input operation

of parameters, unlike the conventional image processing method.

(Form 35) Also, in order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing method of form 35 comprises
5 a first specification step of specifying one first domain in a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of domain, a second specification step of specifying one second domain
10 in a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, the second image corresponding to the first image, a correspondence step of associating the specified one first domain and the specified one second domain, and a correction
15 step of correcting the image color information indicating the color of the second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one first domain and the domain representative color information of the one second domain
20 which are associated.

With the image processing method of form 35, at the correction step, the second image is corrected in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one second domain and the domain
25 representative color information of the one first domain that are specified at the first and second specification steps, it is possible to correct the second image without requiring

the technical input operation of parameters, unlike the conventional image processing method.

(Form 36) Further, the image processing method of form 36 is the image processing method according to form 35, wherein
5 the second specification step comprises specifying two or more second domains, and the correction step comprises correcting the image color information in accordance with the relationship between the position of each of the second plurality of domains and the position of each of the two or
10 more second domains.

With the image processing method according to any one of forms 34 to 36, since one correspondent color is specified by a plurality of domains, the information quantity for reference is increased, whereby the correspondent color with
15 high precision can be obtained.

(Form 37) Further, the image processing method of form 37 is the image processing method according to form 35, wherein the first specification step comprises specifying two or more first domains, the second specification step comprises
20 specifying two or more second domains, and the correction step comprises correcting the image color information by different correction methods each depending on the number of correspondences between the two or more first domains and the two or more second domains.

25 With the image processing method of form 37, when the color of the first image and the color of the second image are not slid evenly on the color space, for example, it is

possible to correct the color of image by specifying plural sets of correspondent color in view of a slide in the color between both images.

(Form 38) Further, the image processing method of form 5 38 is the image processing method according to form 35, further comprising a definition step of defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of small domains contained in the 10 domain.

(Form 39) Further, the image processing method of form 39 is the image processing method according to form 38, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of 15 a plurality of small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of a plurality of small domains contained in the domain.

With the image processing method of form 38 or 39, since the domain representative color information is defined by 20 the small domain representative color information indicating the representative color of small domain, it is possible to define the domain representative color information more properly.

(Form 40) Further, the image processing method of form 25 40 is the image processing method according to form 38, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of

the small domain representative color information indicating the color having the highest percentage of area occupied in the domain among the plurality of small domain representative color information.

5 With the image processing method of form 40, since the correspondent color is the color having the greatest appearance frequency (area) within the specified domain, it is possible to avoid that the correspondent color becomes the color regarded as noise.

10 (Form 41) Further, the image processing method of form 41 is the image processing method according to form 38, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating
15 the color in which the percentage of area occupied in the domain is greater than or equal to a predetermined rate among the plural pieces of small domain representative color information.

20 With the image processing method of form 41, when a photographed image of the cloth or clothes is processed, with a fine design in the domain of correspondent color, and there are a plurality of colors of which the appearance frequency (area) is over a predetermined rate and the color difference is over a predetermined rate, the representative value of
25 each color is the correspondent color, and the correspondent color of each color making up the design is processed, whereby it is possible to correct the image at higher precision.

(Form 42) Further, the image processing method of form 42 is the image processing method according to form 35, wherein at least one of the first specification step and the second specification step comprises specifying a neighboring domain
5 near the one domain specified by the one specification step, and the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the one domain in terms of the neighboring domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain
10 and the neighboring domain.

With the image processing method of form 42, when the correspondent color is specified by one point on the image, for example, in some instances the point may not have the intended color due to mingled noise or dust in inputting the
15 image, whereby the correspondent color is made the representative color of the domain by specifying the domain, making it possible to reduce the influence of the noise.

(Form 43) Further, the image processing method of form 43 is the image processing method according to form 35, wherein
20 at least one of the first specification step and the second specification step comprises specifying an equivalent domain represented by the color substantially equivalent to the representative color of the one domain specified by the one specification step, and the definition step comprises
25 defining the domain representative color information of the one domain in terms of the equivalent domain representative

color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain and the equivalent domain.

With the image processing method of form 43, when a specific point is designated, the correspondent color is made
5 the color of the domain based on a predetermined range of color difference consecutive from the designated point, whereby it is possible to automatically select the appropriate range and reduce the influence of noise.

(Form 44) Further, the image processing method of form
10 44 is the image processing method according to form 35, wherein at least one of the first specification step and the second specification step comprises specifying the one domain by any drawing.

(Form 45) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems,
15 an image processing apparatus of form 45 is the image processing apparatus for performing an image processing for a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain and a second image capable
20 of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, comprising a first specification part for specifying one first domain, a second specification part for specifying one second domain, and a correction part for correcting the image color information
25 indicating the color of each of the plurality of second images in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one first domain and

the domain representative color information of the one second domain.

(Form 46) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 46 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, wherein the second specification part specifies two or more second domains, and the correction part corrects the image color information in accordance with the relationship between the position of each of the second plurality of domains and the position of each of the two or more second domains.

10 (Form 47) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 47 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, wherein the first specification part specifies two or more first domains, the second specification part specifies two or more second domains, and the correction part corrects the image color information by different correction methods each depending on the number of correspondences between the two or more first domains and the two or more second domains.

(Form 48) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 48 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, further comprising a definition part for defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of small domains contained in the domain.

25 (Form 49) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 49 is the image processing apparatus according to form 48, wherein the definition part defines the domain

representative color information of the domain in terms of a plurality of small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of a plurality of small domains contained in the domain.

5 (Form 50) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 50 is the image processing apparatus according to form 48, wherein the definition part defines the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating
10 the color having the highest percentage of area occupied in the domain among the plurality of small domain representative color information.

 (Form 51) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 51 is the image processing apparatus according to form
15 48, wherein the definition part defines the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the color in which the percentage of area occupied in the domain is greater than or equal to a predetermined rate among
20 the plural pieces of small domain representative color information.

 (Form 52) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 52 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, wherein at least one of the first specification part and
25 the second specification part specifies a neighboring domain near the one domain specified by the one specification part, and the definition part defines the domain representative

color information of the one domain in terms of the neighboring domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain and the neighboring domain.

5 (Form 53) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 53 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, wherein at least one of the first specification part and the second specification part specifies an equivalent domain represented by the color substantially equivalent to the
10 representative color of the one domain specified by the one specification part, and the definition part defines the domain representative color information of the one domain in terms of the equivalent domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain
15 and the equivalent domain.

 (Form 54) Further, the image processing apparatus of form 54 is the image processing apparatus according to form 45, wherein at least one of the first specification part and the second specification part specifies the one domain by
20 any drawing.

 (Form 55) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing program of form 55 comprises, in a second image corresponding to a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain
25 representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain, the second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the

domain representative color information, a specification step of specifying one second domain, and a correction step of correcting the image color information indicating the color of the second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one second domain and the domain representative color information of one first domain corresponding to the one second domain.

(Form 56) Also, in order to solve the above-mentioned problems, an image processing program of form 56 is the image processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, the computer having a first input part, a second input part of which the color characteristic is different from that of the first input part, a decision part, a first specification part, a second specification part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing between a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain and a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, the program comprising a first specification step of causing the first specification part to specify one first domain, a second specification step of causing the second specification part to specify one second domain, and a correction step of causing the correction part to correct the image color information indicating the color of the second image in accordance with

the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one first domain and the domain representative color information of the one second domain.

(Form 57) Further, the image processing program of form 57 is the image processing program according to form 56, wherein the second specification step comprises specifying two or more second domains, and the correction step comprises correcting the image color information in accordance with the relationship between the position of each of the plurality of second domains and the position of each of the two or more second domains.

(Form 58) Further, the image processing program of form 58 is the image processing program according to form 56, wherein the first specification step comprises specifying two or more first domains, the second specification step comprises specifying two or more second domains, and the correction step comprises correcting the image color information by different correction methods each depending on the number of correspondences between the two or more first domains and the two or more second domains.

(Form 59) Further, the image processing program of form 59 is the image processing program according to form 56, further comprising a definition step of defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of small domains contained in the domain.

(Form 60) Further, the image processing program of form 60 is the image processing program according to form 59, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of a plurality of small domain representative color information indicating the representative colors of a plurality of small domains contained in the domain.

(Form 61) Further, the image processing program of form 61 is the image processing program according to form 59, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the color having the highest percentage of area occupied in the domain among the plurality of small domain representative color information.

(Form 62) Further, the image processing program of form 62 is the image processing program according to form 59, wherein the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the domain in terms of the small domain representative color information indicating the color in which the percentage of area occupied in the domain is greater than or equal to a predetermined rate among the plural pieces of small domain representative color information.

(Form 63) Further, the image processing program of form 63 is the image processing program according to form 56, wherein at least one of the first specification step and the second

specification step comprises specifying a neighboring domain near the one domain specified by the one specification step, and the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the one domain in terms of the neighboring domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain and the neighboring domain.

(Form 64) Further, the image processing program of form 64 is the image processing program according to form 56, wherein at least one of the first specification step and the second specification step comprises specifying an equivalent domain represented by the color substantially equivalent to the representative color of the one domain specified by the one specification step, and the definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of the one domain in terms of the equivalent domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both the one domain and the equivalent domain.

(Form 65) Further, the image processing program of form 65 is the image processing program according to form 56, wherein at least one of the first specification step and the second specification step comprises specifying the one domain by any drawing.

(Form 66) In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, a computer readable storage medium of form 66 storing an image processing program is the computer readable storage medium storing the image processing program for enabling a computer

to perform an image processing, the computer having a first input part, a second input part of which the color characteristic is different from that of the first input part, a decision part, a first specification part, a second specification part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing between a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain and a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, the program comprising a first specification step of causing the first specification part to specify one first domain, a second specification step of causing the second specification part to specify one second domain, and a correction step of causing the correction part to correct the image color information indicating the color of the second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of the one first domain and the domain representative color information of the one second domain.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 is a diagram showing the configuration of an image processing apparatus according to the embodiments 1 to 3 of the present invention;

Figures 2A and 2B are views showing two images before processing by the image processing apparatus of an embodiment 1;

Figures 3B1, 3B2 and 3B3 are views showing two images after processing by the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 1;

Figure 4 is a flowchart showing the operation of the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 1;

Figures 5A and 5B are graphs for explaining the extraction of feature color in the embodiment 1;

Figure 6 is a diagram showing the correction by a correction part in the embodiment 1;

Figure 7 is a diagram showing another correction by the correction part in a modification of the embodiment 1;

Figure 8 is a diagram showing another correction by the correction part in another modification of the embodiment 1;

Figures 9A and 9B are views showing two images before processing by an image processing apparatus of an embodiment 2;

Figures 10A and 10B are views showing two images after processing by the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2;

Figure 11 is a flowchart showing the operation of the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2;

Figure 12 is a diagram showing the correction by the correction part of the embodiment 2;

Figures 13A to 13C are views showing the areas in the modifications 3, 4 and 5 of the embodiment 2;

Figures 14A and 14B are views showing two images processed by an image processing apparatus of an embodiment 3;

5 Figure 15 is a diagram showing the correction by the correction part of the embodiment 3;

Figure 16 is a diagram showing another correction by the correction part of the embodiment 3; and

10 Figures 17A and 17B are concept diagrams showing one example of a computer readable recording medium where an image processing program 19 is recorded.

Best Mode for Carrying Out the Invention

15 The preferred embodiment 1 of an image processing apparatus according to the present invention will be described below with reference to the drawings.

<Configuration>

20 Figure 1 is a diagram showing the configuration of an image processing apparatus according to an embodiment of the invention, Figures 2A and 2B show two images before processing by the image processing apparatus of this embodiment, and Figures 3B1, 3B2 and 3B3 show two images after processing by the image processing apparatus of this embodiment. The image processing apparatus 10 of this embodiment comprises
25 a first input part 11, a second input part 12, an operation part 13, a storage part 14, a detection part 15, a correction

part 16, a display part 17 and a printing part 18 to correct a second image 30a by referring to a first image 20a.

The first input part 11 may be a scanner, for example, for scanning the print contents printed on a print medium
5 such as a print sheet and reading them in digital format to produce the first image data 20b representing the read first image 20a.

The second input part 12 may be a digital camera, for example, for picking up an image of the subject such as
10 substance to produce the second image data 30b representing the taken second image 30a.

Herein, the input by the first input part 11 that is the scanner has a relatively high reliability in the color of the input first image 20a, because the conditions for its
15 light source and background are fixed, whereas the input by the second input part 12 that is the digital camera has a relatively low reliability in the color of the input second image 30a, because the conditions for its light source and background are not fixed.

20 Though in this embodiment, the first input part 11 and the second input part 12 are integrated, together with the other parts 13 to 18, into the image processing apparatus 10, the first input part 11, the second input part 12 and the other parts (13 to 18) may be constituted separately.

25 As shown in Figures 2A and 2B, the first image 20a representing a sample of cloth is composed of the objects 21a, 21b, 21c and 21d which are basic texture, triangular

pattern, round pattern and background, and the second image 30a representing a dress fabricated using the cloth is also composed of the objects 31a, 31b, 31c and 31d which are basic texture, triangular pattern, round pattern and background
5 corresponding to the objects 21a, 21b, 21c and 21d of the first image 20a.

Returning to Figure 1, the operation part 13 may be a mouse or a keyboard, for example, which is employed to perform an operation required to correct the first and second images
10 20a and 30a, for example, to specify a range for extracting the feature color.

The storage part 14 may be a storage medium such as a hard disk or a flexible disk, for example, which is employed to store the first image data 20b produced by the first input
15 part 11 and the second image data 30b produced by the second input part 12. The storage part 14 also stores a program 19 for causing the image processing apparatus 10 to perform the image processing for the first and second images 20a and 30a.

20 The detection part 15 may be a CPU (Central Processing Unit), for example, which extracts a first plurality of feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c (as will be described later with reference to Figures 5A and 5B) from the first image 20a and extracts a second plurality of feature colors 32a, 32b and
25 32c (as will be described later with reference to Figures 5A and 5B) from the second image 30a to associate both the feature colors.

The correction part 16, may be a CPU, like the detection part 15, which corrects the colors of the second image 30a having relatively low reliability to conform with the colors of the first image 20a having relatively high reliability in accordance with the correspondences between the first plurality of feature colors 22a, 22b, 22c and the second plurality of feature colors 32a, 32b, 32c, which are made by the detection part 15.

The display part 17 may be a liquid crystal display or a CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) display, which displays the first image 20a and the second image 30a before correction, and the second images 30a1, 30a2 and 30a3 after correction, as shown in Figures 2A and 2B, and 3B1 to 3B3.

The printing part 18 may be an inkjet printer, for example, which prints the first image 20a and the second image 30a before correction, and the second images 30a1, 30a2 and 30a3 after correction, like the display part 17, as shown in Figures 2A and 2B, and 3B1 to 3B3.

<Operation>

Figure 4 is a flowchart showing the operation of the image processing apparatus of this embodiment. The operation of the image processing apparatus of this embodiment will be described below along with the flowchart of Figure 4. Herein, the program 19 in this embodiment comprises a detection step corresponding to steps S4 and S5 of Figure 4 and a correction step corresponding to step S6 of Figure 4.

Step S1: The first input part 11 reads the image 20a as shown in Figure 2A by scanning it to produce the first image data 20b representing the contents of the image 20a. Subsequently, the second input part 12 picks up an image of the subject to produce the second image data 30b representing the second image 30a acquired as a result, as shown in Figure 2B.

Step S2: The first and second input parts 11 and 12 output the first and second image data 20b and 30b to the storage part 14, which stores the first and second image data 20b and 30b.

Step S3: The detection part 15 reads the first and second image data 20b and 30b stored in the storage part 14 from the storage part 14, and displays them on the display part 17.

Step S4: The detection part 15 extracts the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c from the first image 20a and extracts the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c from the second image 30a.

Figures 5A and 5B are diagrams for explaining the extraction of feature colors. In a color histogram as shown in Figures 5A and 5B, the transversal axis represents the hue and the longitudinal axis represents the frequency of appearance. Figure 5A shows the frequency of appearance along the longitudinal axis, which is equivalent to a total number of elements or a sum of areas making up the first image 20a as shown in Figure 2A, for each hue as represented along the

transversal axis. Similarly, Figure 5B shows the frequency of appearance along the longitudinal axis, which is equivalent to a total number of elements or a sum of areas making up the second image 30a as shown in Figure 2B, for each hue as represented along the transversal axis. Herein, the number of elements or the area means the number of pixels in the bit map data, or the area of closed domain in the vector data, for example.

The detection part 15 selects the representative colors 23a, 23b and 23c at the highest appearance frequency (peak) of hue, or more correctly, the maximal value of hue, as the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c of the first image 20a, from the color histogram of Figure 5A. Instead of the above selection, the detection part 15 may select directly the representative color groups 24a, 24b and 24c with higher appearance frequency of hue than a threshold Th , or its average, median and mode, to avoid adverse influence due to hue with low appearance frequency and improve the precision of correction.

The detection part 15 selects the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c for the second image 30a in the same way as selecting the representative colors 23a, 23b and 23c or the representative color groups 24a, 24b and 24c for the first image 20a. In the latter selection, the detection part 15 may employ any other threshold than the threshold Th .

The transversal axis in Figures 5A and 5B may employ a color specification system (one- or two-dimensional or more)

such as RGB, CMY, hue-saturation-lightness, or L*a*b of the CIE (International Lighting Commission), whereby it is possible to make adequate correction between two images in which the illuminating environment (lightness) is greatly different at the photographing time without giving consideration to lightness.

Instead of the above extraction using the color histogram, the detection part 15 may extract the feature colors representing the range or domain which is specified by the user on the operation part 13, for example.

Step S5: The detection part 15 associates the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c of the first image 20a and the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c of the second image 30a. The detection part 15 associates the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c so that the total of differences between one feature color 22x (x is a, b or c) of the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and one feature color 32y (y is a, b or c) of the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c, or in other words, the total of color differences between the feature colors 22x and 32y corresponding to each other for possible combinations of the first feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and the second feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c may be minimized, for example.

In calculating the total of color differences (total difference), it is possible for the detection part 15 to weight each color differences between the feature colors 22x and 32y, and also the appearance frequency of each feature colors

22x and 32y, and calculate the weighted sum of the weighted color differences and the weighted appearance frequencies.

As a result of the correspondence, the representative color 23a that is the feature color 22a of the first image 20a and the correspondent color 35a that is the feature color 32a of the second image 30a are associated, the representative color 23b that is the feature color 22b of the first image 20a and the correspondent color 35b that is the feature color 32b of the second image 30a are associated, and the representative color 23c that is the feature color 22c of the first image 20a and the correspondent color 35c that is the feature color 32c of the second image 30a are associated, as shown in Figures 5A and 5B.

The detection part 15, instead of the correspondence based on the total of color differences, may make correspondence employing the conventionally well-known pattern matching methods (e.g., DP matching, graph matching or DLA (Dynamic Link Architecture) of associating the graphs (nodes) by optimizing the evaluation function by dynamic statistical method). Since the optimal correspondence can be made over the entire histogram as shown in Figures 5A and 5B by employing the pattern matching methods, the correspondences between the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c are made at high precision.

Step S6: The correction part 16 corrects the color tone of the second image 30a based on the first image 20a by referring to the above correspondences.

Figure 6 shows the correction by the correction part 5 in this embodiment. The correction part 16 translates the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c of the second image 30a as shown in Figure 2B into the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c of the first image 20a as shown in Figure 2A, and corrects other colors than the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c of the 10 second image 30a, based on the correspondences between the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c, thereby producing the second image 30a1 after correction as shown in Figure 3B1, as shown in Figure 6.

Herein, if correction is made without being based on 15 the correspondence detected by the detection part 15, unlike the above correction, correction is extremely dependent upon the hue of triangular pattern 21b and 31b, or the hue of round pattern 21c and 31c, as shown in Figures 3B2 and 3B3, producing the second image 30a2 and 30a3 quite different from the second 20 image 30a1 as shown in Figure 3B1.

<Effects>

With the image processing apparatus 10 of this embodiment as described above, the detection part 15 extracts the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c from the first image 20a, extracts 25 the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c from the second image 30a, and further associates the feature colors 22a, 22b and 22c and the feature colors 32a, 32b and 32c, and the correction

part 16 corrects the second image 30a based on the first image 20a by referring to the correspondences, whereby it is possible to easily match the color tone of the second image 30a with the color tone of the first image 20a.

5 (Embodiment 2)

Figure 7 shows another correction by the correction part. The correction part 16 may make the correction as shown in Figure 7, instead of the correction as shown in Figure 6, to achieve the same effects as above. Specifically, supposing
 10 that the feature colors 22a and 32a are only associated, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C(32a) of the feature color 32a into the hue C(22a) of the feature color 22a and further corrects, based on the correction, the hue C(32c) of the feature color 32c into the hue C(22c) of the feature
 15 color 22c in the color specification system $L^*a^*b^*$, as shown in Figure 7.

More particularly, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C(32c) into the hue C(22c) so that the angle D_c between hue C(32c) and hue C(22c) may be equal to the angle D_a between
 20 hue C(32a) and hue C(22a), and the relationship between the distance $r(32c)$ between hue C(32c) and origin O and the distance $r(22c)$ between hue C(22c) and origin O may be equivalent to the relationship between the distance $r(32a)$ between hue C(32a) and origin O and the distance $r(22a)$ between hue C(22a)
 25 and origin O.

Figure 8 shows another correction by the correction part. Supposing that only the feature colors 22a and 32a, and the

feature colors 22b and 32b are associated, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C(32a) in the domain 32a into the hue C(22a), the hue C(32b) into the hue C(22b), and further the hue C(32c) into the hue C(22c) by weighting the first
5 relationship between hue C(32a) and hue C(22a) and the second relationship between hue C(32b) and hue C(22b) depending on a difference in color value between hue C(32c) and hue C(32a) and a difference in color value between hue C(32c) and hue C(32b) in the color specification system $L^*a^*b^*$, as shown
10 in Figure 8.

The same effects are obtained as above by not operating the amount of L^* strongly related to shading but operating the amount of c^* , h^* mostly related to the tint in the $L^*c^*h^*$ color specification system, instead of operating the amount
15 of a^* , b^* in the color specification system $L^*a^*b^*$ as above.

Herein, an image processing apparatus of this embodiment has the same configuration as shown in Figure 1 for the embodiment 1, and will be described below by referring to Figure 1 again. In this embodiment, the first image 20a and
20 the second image 30a of the embodiment 1 in Figure 1 correspond to the first image 20a and the second image 30a as shown in Figures 9A and 9B. Accordingly, in this embodiment, in Figures 9A and 9B, 10A and 10B, 12 and 13A to 13C, the same signs as in the embodiment 1 may designate different parts
25 from those of the embodiment 1. Also, in this embodiment, Figure 11 is a flowchart showing the operation of the image processing apparatus 10 of Figure 4 in the embodiment 1.

<Configuration>

Figures 9A and 9B show two images before processing by the image processing apparatus of this embodiment, and Figures 10A and 10B show two images after processing by the image processing apparatus of this embodiment. The image processing apparatus 10 of this embodiment comprises a first input part 11, a second input part 12, an operation part 13, a storage part 14, a processing part 15, a correction part 16, a display part 17 and a printing part 18 to correct the second image 30a by referring to the first image 20a.

The first input part 11 may be a scanner, for example, for scanning the print contents printed on a print medium such as a print sheet and reading them in digital format to produce the first image data 20b representing the read first image 20a.

The second input part 12 may be a digital camera, for example, for picking up an image of the subject such as substance to produce the second image data 30b representing the taken second image 30a in the same way as above.

Though in this embodiment, the first input part 11 and the second input part 12 are integrated, together with the other parts 13 to 18, into the image processing apparatus 10, the first input part 11, the second input part 12 and the other parts (13 to 18) may be constituted separately.

As shown in Figures 9A and 9B, the first image 20a is composed of plural pieces of pixel data P11 to Pmn (m, n is an integer of two or greater) and the second image 30a is

composed of plural pieces of pixel data Q11 to Qmn. Each of the pixel data P11 to Pmn and Q11 to Qmn has the color information indicating three elements of color, or the hue, saturation and lightness. Also, the first image 20a is
5 composed of the objects 21a, 21b, 21c and 21d such as sky, ground and tree, for example, and the second image 30a is also composed of the objects 31a, 31b, 31c and 31d.

Returning to Figure 1, the operation part 13 acting as the specification part may be a mouse or a keyboard, for example,
10 which is employed to perform an operation required to correct the first and second images 20a and 30a. The operation part 13 may be employed to specify a domain to associate the domains 22a to 22d of the first image 20a and the domains 32a to 32d of the second image 30a, as shown in Figures 9A and 9B.

15 More particularly, the operation part 13 may be employed, for the first image 20a and the second image 30a, to specify the position, shape and size of the domains 22a, 32a by any drawing to associate a desired domain 22a of the first image 20a and a desired domain 32a of the second image 30a, as shown
20 in Figures 9A and 9B. Similarly, the operation part 13 may be employed to specify other desired domains 22b, 22c and 22d of the first image 20a and other desired domains 32b, 32c and 32d of the second image 30a. In the following, the information indicating the representative color of each of
25 the domains 22a to 22d and 32a to 32d is referred to as "domain representative color information".

Returning to Figure 1, the storage part 14 may be a storage medium such as a hard disk or a flexible disk, which is employed to store the first image data 20b produced by the first input part 11 and the second image data 30b produced by the second input part 12. The storage part 14 also stores a program 19 for causing the image processing apparatus 10 to perform the image processing for the first and second images 20a and 30a.

The processing part 15 may be a CPU (Central Processing Unit), for example, to control the overall operation of the image processing apparatus 10, and define the domain representative color information of the domains 22a to 22d and 32a to 32d.

The correction part 16 may be a CPU, like the processing part 15, which corrects the hue of the second image 30a in accordance with the hue relationship between one domain 22a and one domain 32a specified by the operation part 13.

The display part 17 may be a liquid crystal display or a CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) display, and displays the first image 20a and the second image 30a before and after correction, as shown in Figures 9A and 9B, and 10A and 10B.

The printing part 18 may be an inkjet printer, for example, and prints the first image 20a and the second image 30a before and after correction, like the display part 17, as shown in Figures 9A and 9B, and 10A and 10B.

<Operation>

Figure 11 is a flowchart showing the operation of the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2. The operation of the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2 will be described below along with the flowchart of Figure 11.

5 Herein, the program 19 in this embodiment comprises a first specification step and a second specification step corresponding to step S10 of Figure 11 and a correction step corresponding to step S11 of Figure 11.

Step S7: The first input part 11 reads the image 20a
10 as shown in Figure 9A by scanning it to produce the first image data 20b representing the contents of the image 20a. Subsequently, the second input part 12 picks up an image of the subject to produce the second image data 30 representing the second image 30a acquired as a result, as shown in Figure
15 9B.

Step S8: The first and second input parts 11, 12 output the first and second image data 20b, 30b to the storage part 14, which stores the first and second image data 20b, 30b.

Step S9: The processing part 15 reads the first and second
20 image data 20b, 30b stored in the storage part 14 from the storage part 14, and displays them on the display part 17.

Step S10: The user specifies any domain of the first image 20a, for example, domain 22a, using the operation part 13 and any domain of the second image 30a, for example, domain
25 32a (these specified domains 22a, 32a are hereinafter referred to as "specified domain 22a" and "specified domain 32a"), using the operation part 13, thereby associating the specified

domain 22a and the specified domain 32a. Herein, when the user specifies the domain by operating the operation part 13, the processing part 15 prompts the user to specify any domain of the first or second image 20a, 30a by displaying
5 a message or the like.

Step S11: The correction part 16 corrects the second image data 30b in accordance with the correspondence relation between domain 22a and domain 32a. Herein, the correction part 16 adjusts the hue of the entire second image 30a, or
10 provides the entire second image 30a with "spot", as shown in Figure 10B, based on the relationship between hue of the domain 22a before correction (hue abstracted by "spot") and hue of the domain 32a before correction (hue abstracted by "solid color"), i.e., the correspondence relation between
15 "spot" and "solid color", as shown in Figures 9A and 9B.

Figure 12 shows the correction by the correction part. As shown in Figure 12, the correction part 16 corrects the hue of the second image 30a before correction into the second image data 30b' after correction representing the corrected
20 second image 30a as shown in Figure 10B. More particularly, the correction part 16 corrects the hue $C(32a)$, $C(32b)$, $C(32c)$ and $C(32d)$ that are the domain representative color information of the specified domain 32a, domain 32b, domain 32c and domain 32d in the first image data 30b into the hue
25 $C'(32a)$, $C'(32b)$, $C'(32c)$ and $C'(32d)$, based on the relationship between the hue $C(32a)$ of the specified domain 32a in the second image data 30b before correction and the

hue C' (32a) after correction that is the hue C (22a) of the specified domain 22a in the first image data 20b, and additionally corrects other range than the specified domain 32a and domains 32b to 32d in the same way. Briefly, the
5 correction part 16 corrects the hue of the entire second image 30a, based on the hue relation between the hue C (32a) of the specified domain 32a and the hue C (22a) of the specified domain 22a.

<Effects>

10 With the image processing apparatus 10 of the embodiment 2 as described above, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C (32a) that is the domain representative color information of the specified domain 32a specified by the operation part 13 into the hue C (22a) or hue C' (32a) that is the domain
15 representative color information of the specified domain 22a corresponding to the domain, and additionally corrects the hue C (32b), C (32c) and C (32d) that are the domain representative color information of other domains 32b to 32d into the hue C' (32b), C' (32c) and C' (32d), thereby correcting
20 the hue of the entire second image 30a, whereby it is possible to make the correction without inputting the technical parameters as conventionally needed.

In the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2 as described above, the same effects are obtained by directly
25 specifying the color itself in the first and second images 20a, 30a in making the correction, instead of specifying the color of the domain 22a, 32a or the color defined by the domain

representative color information in the site or range such as domains 22a, 32a in the first and second images 20a, 30a.

(Modification 1 of embodiment 2)

Instead of one set of domains 32a, 22a as specified above,
5 two or more sets of domains, for example, domains 32a and 22a and domains 32b and 22b, may be specified, in which the hue C (32c) that is the domain representative color information of domain 32c is corrected by weighting the first relationship between domain 32a and domain 22a, and the second relationship
10 between domain 32b and domain 22b depending on a difference in the domain representative color information between domain 32c and domain 32a for the domain 32c, or difference in the color value, and a difference in the domain representative color information between domain 32c and domain 32b, or
15 difference in the color value, thereby achieving the same effects as above. Herein, the "color value" is the numerical value representing the conceptual chromaticity in the coordinate.

(Modification 2 of embodiment 2)

20 The above correction may be made differently by weighting depending on the number of sets of the specified domains (e.g., domains 32a and 32b), instead of depending on the difference in color value as in the modification 1, or more particularly, the hue may be corrected by one conventionally known correction
25 method when specifying one set of domains and by another conventionally known correction method when specifying two sets of domains, thereby achieving the same effects as above.

(Modifications 3, 4 and 5 of embodiment 2)

Figures 13A to 13B show three domains in the modifications 3, 4 and 5. In a modification 3, the domain 22a is composed of plural small domains 22-1, 22-2, 22-3, ..., 22-i (i is any integer), that are equivalent to the pixel data P11 to Pmn, as shown in Figure 13A. The processing part 15 accurately decides the domain representative color information of domain 22a, from the viewpoint of average, median and mode, employing the small domain representative color information that are the color information of plural small domains 22-1 to 22-i.

The processing part 15 defines the domain representative color information of domain 22a in terms of the small domain representative color information of one or more small domains among the plural small domains 22-1 to 22-i. More specifically, the processing part 15 defines it in terms of the small domain representative color information of one or more small domains having the highest percentage of area occupied in the domain 22a among the plural small domains 22-1 to 22-i. More desirably, the processing part 15 defines it in terms of the small domain representative color information of small domains of which the percentage of area occupied in the domain 22a is greater than or equal to a predetermined rate (one-third or half, etc.). The processing part 15 defines other domains 22b to 22d and 32a to 32d in the same way.

In a modification 4, the processing part 15 may define the domain representative color information of the domain

22a in terms of the neighboring domain representative color information that is the color information representing both the domain 22a and the neighboring domain 22a' in the neighborhood of the domain 22a that is defined by the contour line (broken line) apart a certain distance from the contour line (solid line) of the domain 22a, as shown in Figure 13B.

In a modification 5, the processing part 15 may define the domain representative color information of the domain 22a in terms of the equivalent domain representative color information that is the color information representing both the domain 22a and the equivalent domain 22a'', which is considered as substantially equivalent to the domain 22a from the viewpoint of the color, for example, hue, saturation and lightness, as shown in Figure 13C.

15 <Configuration>

An image processing apparatus of this embodiment will be described below. The image processing apparatus of this embodiment has the same configuration as shown in Figure 1 for the embodiment 2, but has a different way of correction from the embodiment 2.

Figures 14A and 14B show two images processed by the image processing apparatus in the embodiment 2. The image processing apparatus of this embodiment processes a first image 40a and a second image 50a as shown in Figure 14A, instead of the first image 20a and the second image 30a as shown in Figures 9A and 9B. The first image 40a is inputted from the first input part 11 that is a scanner, and the second image

50a is inputted from the second input part 12 that is a digital camera. The input by the scanner has high reliability and stability in the color of the input first image 40a because the conditions for its light source and background are fixed, whereas the input by the digital camera has low reliability and stability in the color of the input second image 50a because the conditions for its light source and background are not fixed. The image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2 performs the same processings as at steps S7 to S10 of Figure 11, and at step S11, corrects the second image 50a with reference to the first image 40a, like the embodiment 2, but in a different way from the correction of the embodiment 2.

<Operation>

Figure 15 shows the correction by the correction part. For the first image 40a and the second image 50a in the embodiment 2 as shown in Figures 14A and 14B, like the first image 20a and the second image 30a in the embodiment 2, the domains 42a, 42b and 52a to 52c can be specified by the operation part 13. The processing part 15 associates the domain 42a and the domain 52a, and the domain 42b and the domain 52b.

The correction part 16 corrects the hue C(52a) that is the domain representative color information of the domain 52a into the hue C' (52a) that is the hue C(42a) of the domain 42a, and additionally corrects the hue C(52a) of the domain 52c into the hue C' (52a) in accordance with the relationship between hue C(52a) and hue C' (52a) in the conventionally well-known color specification system $L^*a^*b^+$ of the CIE

(International Lighting Commission), as shown in Figure 15. More particularly, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C(52c) into the hue C'(52c) so that the angle Dc between hue C(52c) and hue C'(52c) may be equal to the angle Da between hue C(52a) and hue C'(52a), and the relationship between the distance r(52c) between hue C(52c) and origin O and the distance r'(52c) between hue C'(52c) and origin O may be equivalent to the relationship between the distance r(52a) between hue C(52a) and origin O and the distance r'(52a) between hue C'(52a) and origin O.

Figure 16 shows another correction by the correction part. The correction part 16 corrects the hue C(52a) of the domain 52a into the hue C'(52a) that is the hue C(42a) of the domain 42a, corrects the hue C(52b) of the domain 52b into the hue C'(52b) that is the hue C(42b) of the domain 42b, and corrects the hue C(52c) into the hue C''(52c) in accordance with the first relationship between hue C(52a) and hue C'(52a) and the second relationship between hue C(52b) and hue C'(52b) in the color specification system L*a*b*, as shown in Figure 16. More specifically, the correction part 16 corrects the hue C(52c) into the hue C''(52c) by weighting the first relationship and the second relationship depending on a difference in the color value between hue C(52c) and hue C(52a) and a difference in the color value between hue C(52c) and hue C(52b) and reflecting them to the correction.

<Effects>

With the image processing apparatus of the embodiment 2 as described above, the second image 50a inputted from the second input part 12 that is the digital camera is corrected on the basis of the first image 40a inputted from the first input part 11 that is the scanner in the color specification system $L^*a^*b^*$, whereby the second image 50a can be corrected without inputting the composite parameters for image processing more easily than conventionally.

It may be possible to define the chromaticity in the coordinate in a YUV color specification system, or in a color space of the system in which the color is represented in terms of the information of brightness signal (Y), difference (U) between brightness signal and red component, and difference (V) between brightness signal and blue component, instead of defining the hue in the color value of coordinate in the color space such as the color specification system $L^*a^*b^*$.

Figures 17A and 17B show the CD-ROM (or DVD-ROM) that is one of storage media R1 and R2 readable by the computer. An image processing program 19 of the embodiment 1 to implement the present invention is stored in this storage medium R1, and an image processing program 19 of the embodiment 2 to implement the present invention is stored in this storage medium R2. The image processing program 19 can be easily provided via the computer readable storage medium R1 or R2 such as CD-ROM or DVD-ROM to the user desiring the image processing program 19.

CLAIMS

1. An image processing method comprising:

a detection step of detecting a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image; and

a correction step of correcting said first plurality of colors or said second plurality of colors in accordance with said correspondence.

10

2. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said detection step comprises detecting a plurality of correspondences between a first plurality of feature colors and a second plurality of feature colors by extracting said first plurality of feature colors featuring said first image from said first image and extracting said second plurality of feature colors featuring said second image from said second image.

20 3. The image processing method according to claim 2, wherein said detection step comprises making a first decision of deciding said first plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of said first plurality of colors, and making a second decision of deciding said second plurality of feature colors in accordance with the extent of appearance of said second plurality of colors.

25

4. The image processing method according to claim 3, wherein said detection step comprises making said first decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a third plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among said first plurality of colors, and making said second decision in accordance with the extent of appearance of a fourth plurality of colors over a predetermined extent of appearance among said second plurality of colors.

10 5. The image processing method according to claim 3, wherein said detection step comprises detecting said plurality of correspondences so that a sum of color differences between feature colors corresponding to each other may be minimized for possible combinations of said first plurality of feature colors and said second plurality of feature colors.

6. The image processing method according to claim 5, wherein said detection step comprises weighting said color differences and said extents of appearance, and calculating a weighted sum of color differences and a weighted sum of extents of appearance.

7. The image processing method according to claim 2, wherein said detection step comprises detecting said plurality of correspondences by pattern matching of the color histogram.

8. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said correction step comprises correcting the other colors with reference to one of said first plurality of colors and said second plurality of colors.

5

9. The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said correction step comprises correcting at least one of hue, saturation and lightness based on a color specification system of hue, saturation and lightness.

10

10. The image processing method according to claim 2, wherein said detection step comprises extracting said feature colors based on a predetermined domain, or a domain specified by the user.

15

11. An image processing apparatus comprising:

a detection part of detecting a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image; and

20

a correction part of correcting said first plurality of colors or said second plurality of colors in accordance with said correspondence.

25 12. The image processing apparatus according to claim 11, further comprising a first input part for inputting said first image, and a second input part for inputting said second image.

13. The image processing apparatus according to claim 12,
wherein said first input part is one of a scanner and a digital
camera, and said second input part is the other of said scanner
5 and said digital camera.

14. The image processing apparatus according to claim 11,
wherein said correction part corrects the other colors with
reference to one of said first plurality of colors and said
10 second plurality of colors.

15. The image processing apparatus according to claim 11,
wherein said correction part corrects at least one of said
hue, said saturation and said lightness based on a color
15 specification system of hue, saturation and lightness.

16. The image processing apparatus according to claim 11,
wherein said detection part extracts said feature colors based
on a predetermined range or a range specified by the user.

20

17. An image processing program for enabling a computer to
perform an image processing, said computer having a detection
part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the
image processing, said program comprising:

25 a detection step of causing said detection part to detect
a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of

colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image; and

a correction step of causing said correction part to correct said first plurality of colors or said second plurality of colors in accordance with said correspondence.

18. A computer readable storage medium storing an image processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, said computer having a detection part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing, said program comprising:

a detection step of causing said detection part to detect a correspondence between one color of a first plurality of colors in a first image and one color of a second plurality of colors in a second image; and

a correction step of causing said correction part to correct said first plurality of colors or said second plurality of colors in accordance with said correspondence.

19. An image processing method comprising:

a specification step of specifying the color in each of two images; and

a correction step of correcting the other color in one image in accordance with the relationship between said both colors.

20. An image processing method comprising:

a first specification step of specifying one first domain in a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of domain;

5 a second specification step of specifying one second domain in a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, said second image corresponding to said first image;

10 a correspondence step of associating said specified one first domain and said specified one second domain; and

a correction step of correcting the image color information indicating the color of said second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain

15 representative color information of said one first domain and the domain representative color information of said one second domain which are associated.

21. The image processing method according to claim 20,

20 wherein said second specification step comprises specifying two or more second domains, and said correction step comprises correcting said image color information in accordance with the relationship between the position of each of said second plurality of domains and the position of each of said two

25 or more second domains.

22. The image processing method according to claim 20,
wherein said first specification step comprises specifying
two or more first domains, said second specification step
comprises specifying two or more second domains, and said
5 correction step comprises correcting said image color
information by different correction methods each depending
on the number of correspondences between said two or more
first domains and said two or more second domains.

10 23. The image processing method according to claim 20,
further comprising a definition step of defining said domain
representative color information of said domain in terms of
the small domain representative color information indicating
the representative colors of small domains contained in said
15 domain.

24. The image processing method according to claim 23,
wherein said definition step comprises defining the domain
representative color information of said domain in terms of
20 a plurality of small domain representative color information
indicating the representative colors of a plurality of small
domains contained in said domain.

25. The image processing method according to claim 23,
25 wherein said definition step comprises defining the domain
representative color information of said domain in terms of
the small domain representative color information indicating

the color having the highest percentage of area occupied in said domain among said plurality of small domain representative color information.

5 26. The image processing method according to claim 23,
wherein said definition step comprises defining the domain
representative color information of said domain in terms of
the small domain representative color information indicating
the color in which the percentage of area occupied in said
10 domain is greater than or equal to a predetermined rate among
said plural pieces of small domain representative color
information.

27. The image processing method according to claim 20,
15 wherein at least one of said first specification step and
said second specification step comprises specifying a
neighboring domain near said one domain specified by said
one specification step, and said definition step comprises
defining the domain representative color information of said
20 one domain in terms of the neighboring domain representative
color information indicating the representative color of both
said one domain and said neighboring domain.

28. The image processing method according to claim 20,
25 wherein at least one of said first specification step and
said second specification step comprises specifying an
equivalent domain represented by the color substantially

equivalent to the representative color of said one domain specified by said one specification step, and said definition step comprises defining the domain representative color information of said one domain in terms of the equivalent domain representative color information indicating the representative color of both said one domain and said equivalent domain.

29. The image processing method according to claim 20, wherein at least one of said first specification step and said second specification step comprises specifying said one domain by any drawing.

30. An image processing apparatus for performing an image processing for a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain and a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, comprising:

a first specification part for specifying one first domain;

a second specification part for specifying one second domain; and

a correction part for correcting the image color information indicating the color of each of said plurality of second images in accordance with the relationship between

the domain representative color information of said one first domain and the domain representative color information of said one second domain.

- 5 31. An image processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, said computer having a specification part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing, in a second image corresponding to a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first
10 domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain, said second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, said program comprising:
- 15 a specification step of specifying one second domain;
and
a correction step of correcting the image color information indicating the color of said second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain
20 representative color information of said one second domain and the domain representative color information of one first domain corresponding to said one second domain.

32. An image processing program for enabling a computer to
25 perform an image processing, said computer having a first input part, a second input part of which the color characteristic is different from that of said first input

part, a decision part, a first specification part, a second specification part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing between a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the
5 domain representative color of the domain and a second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, said program comprising:

- 10 a first specification step of causing said first specification part to specify one first domain;
 a second specification step of causing said second specification part to specify one second domain; and
 a correction step of causing said correction part to
15 correct the image color information indicating the color of said second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of said one first domain and the domain representative color information of said one second domain.

20

33. A computer readable storage medium storing an image processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, said computer having a specification part and a correction part which cooperate to perform the image
25 processing, in a second image corresponding to a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the

representative color of the domain, said second image capable of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, said program comprising:

5 a specification step of specifying one second domain;
and

 a correction step of correcting the image color information indicating the color of said second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain
10 representative color information of said one second domain and the domain representative color information of one first domain corresponding to said one second domain.

34. A computer readable storage medium storing an image
15 processing program for enabling a computer to perform an image processing, said computer having a first input part, a second input part of which the color characteristic is different from that of said first input part, a decision part, a first specification part, a second specification part and a
20 correction part which cooperate to perform the image processing between a first image capable of specifying a plurality of first domains each having the domain representative color information indicating the representative color of the domain and a second image capable
25 of specifying a plurality of second domains each having the domain representative color information, said program comprising:

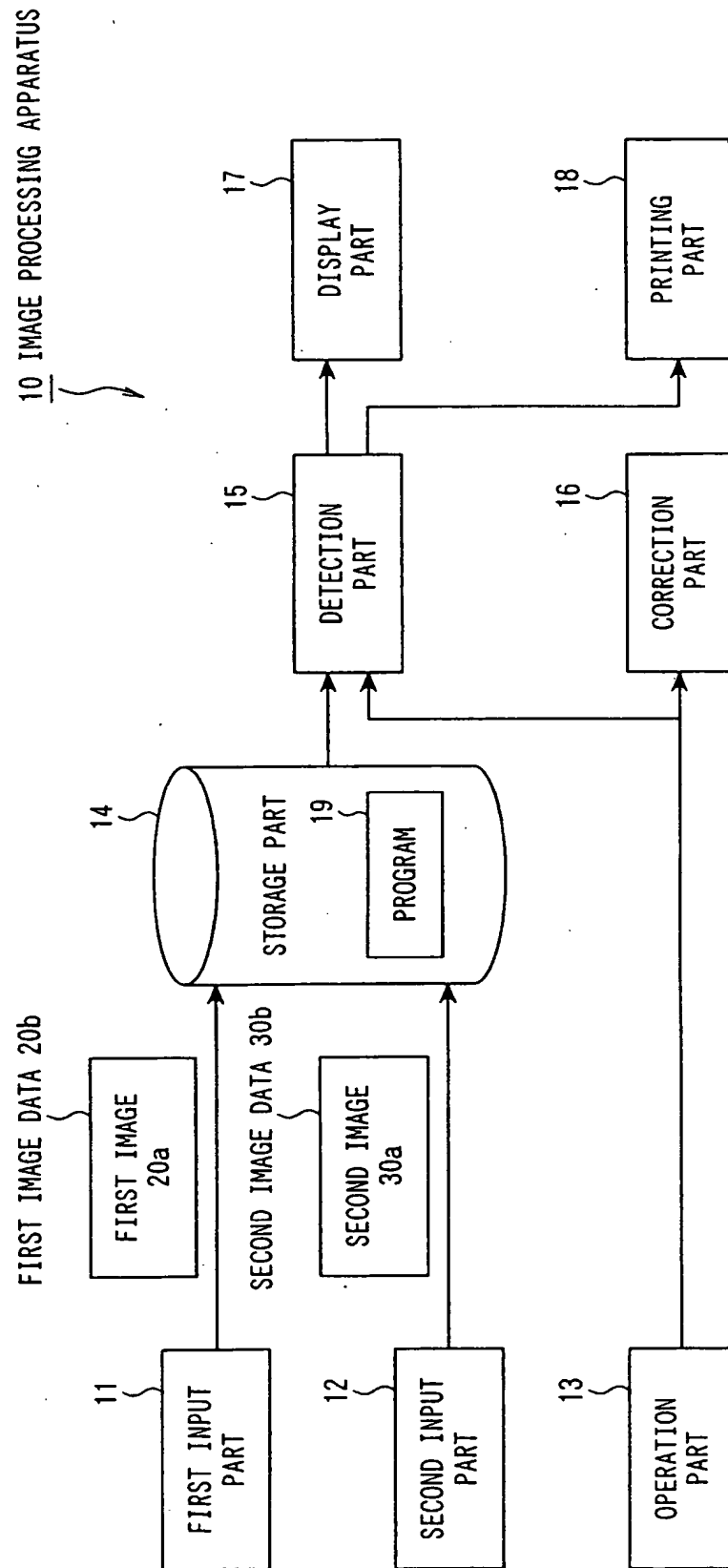
a first specification step of causing said first specification part to specify one first domain;

a second specification step of causing said second specification part to specify one second domain; and

5 a correction step of causing said correction part to correct the image color information indicating the color of said second image in accordance with the relationship between the domain representative color information of said one first domain and the domain representative color information of
10 said one second domain.

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FIG. 1



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FIG. 2A

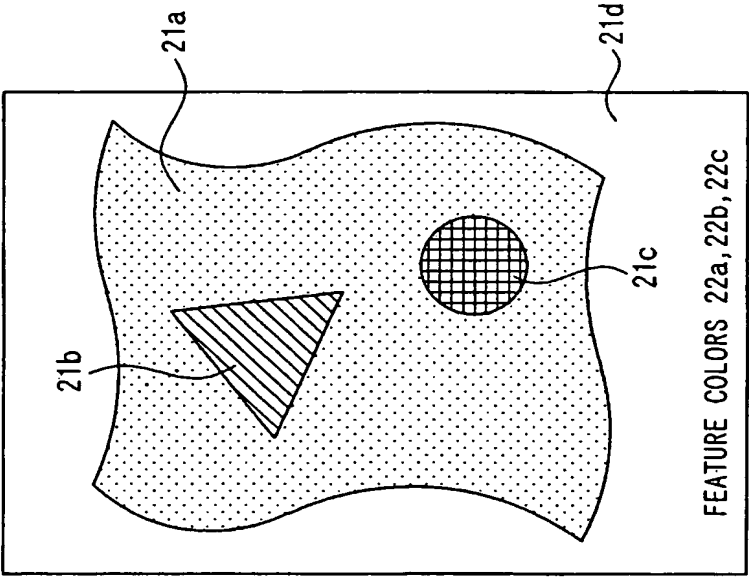
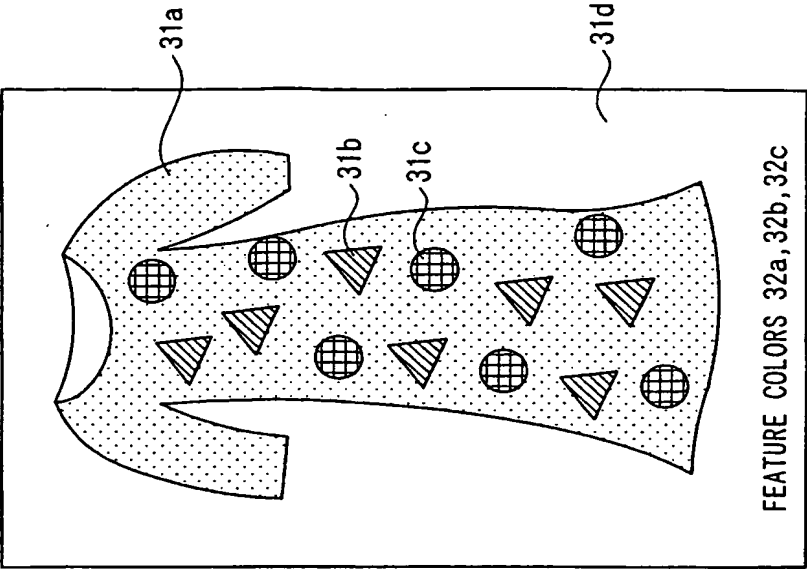
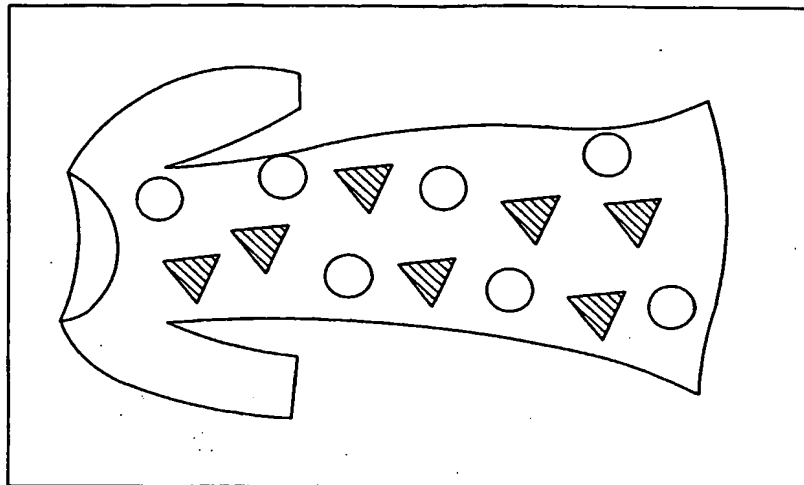


FIG. 2B



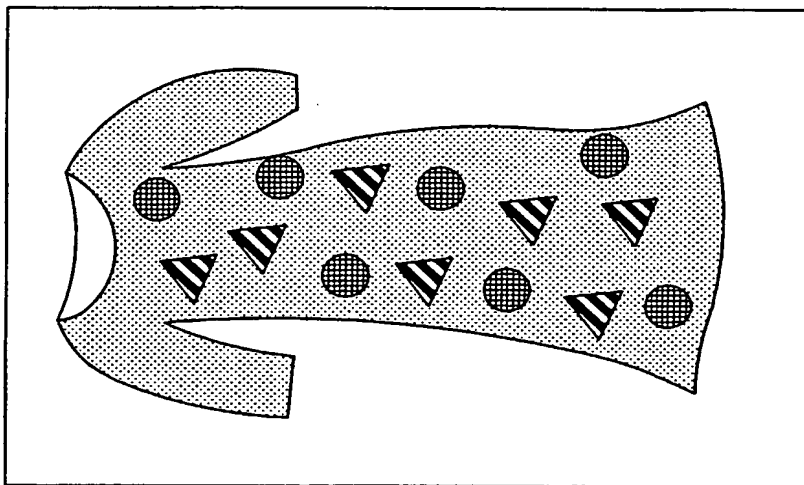
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FIG. 3B3



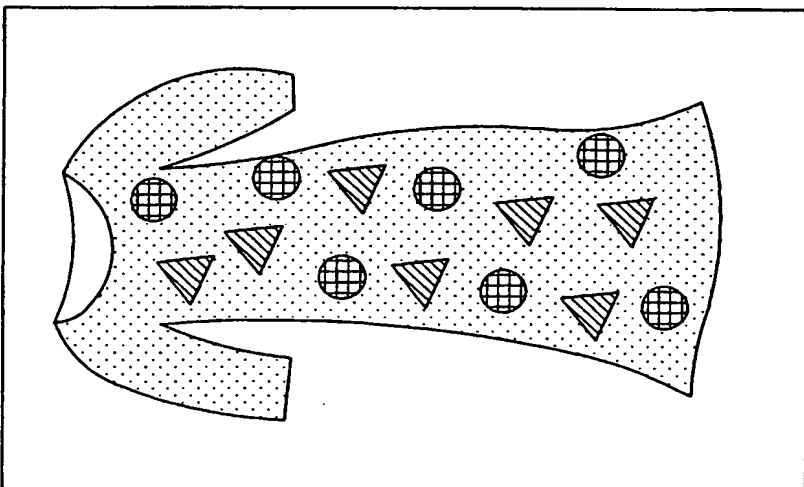
SECOND IMAGE 30a3

FIG. 3B2



SECOND IMAGE 30a2

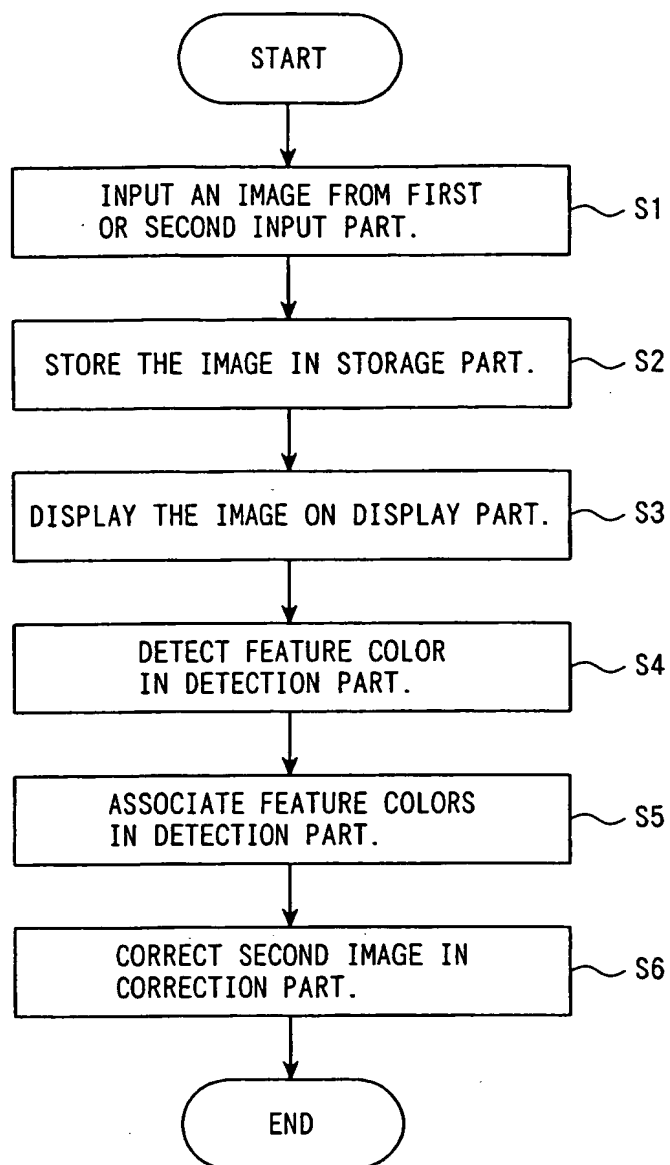
FIG. 3B1



SECOND IMAGE 30a1

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FIG. 4



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FIG. 5A

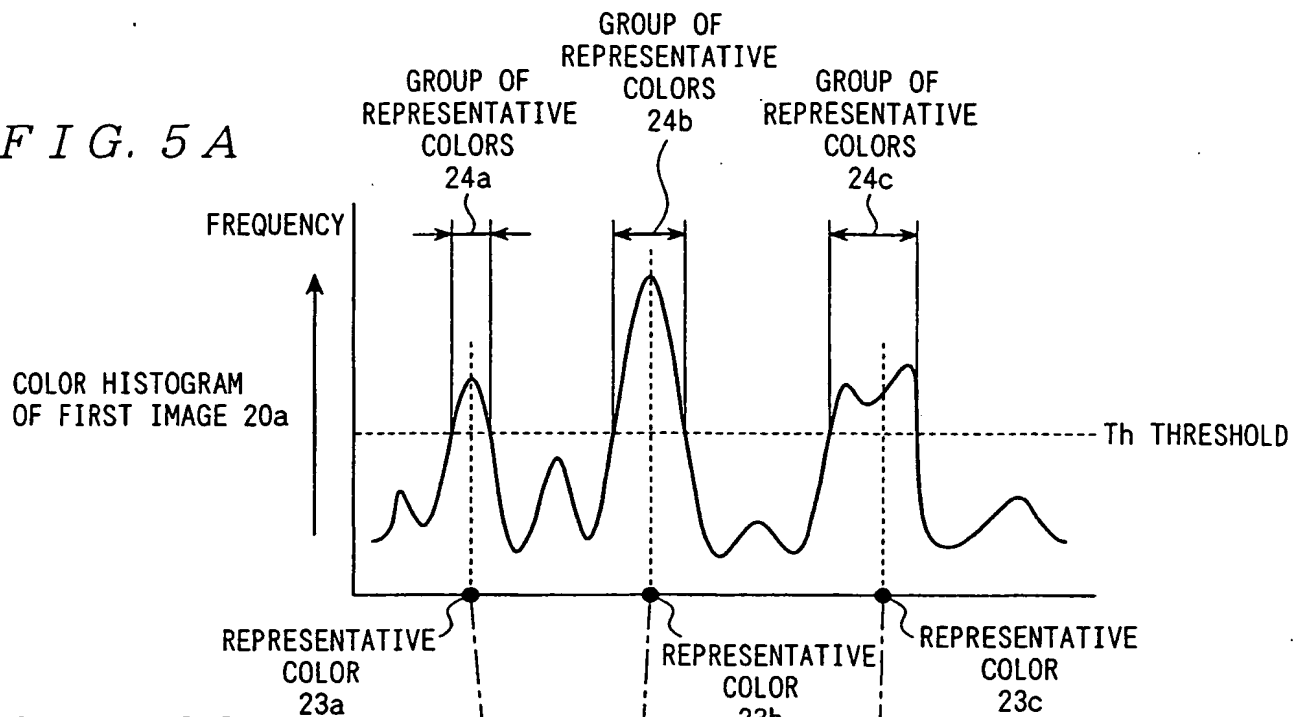
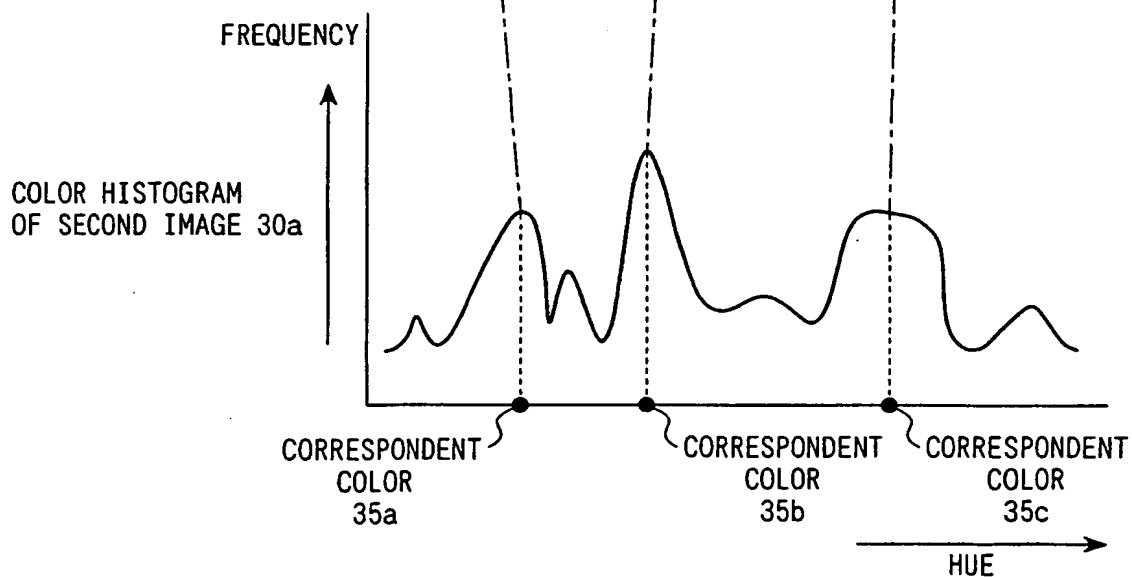
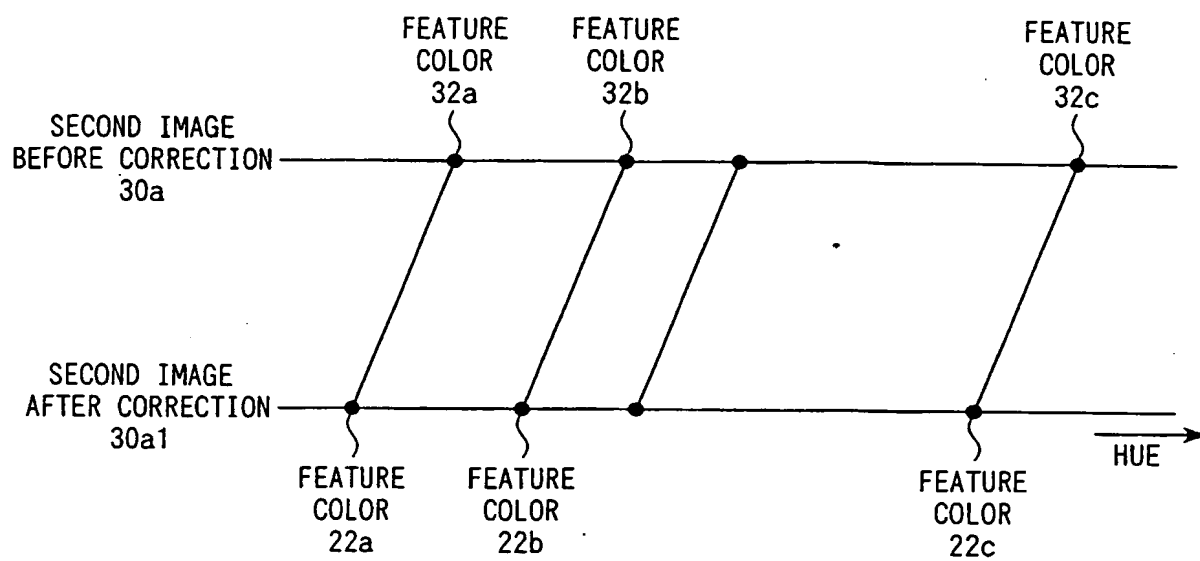


FIG. 5B



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FIG. 6



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FIG. 7

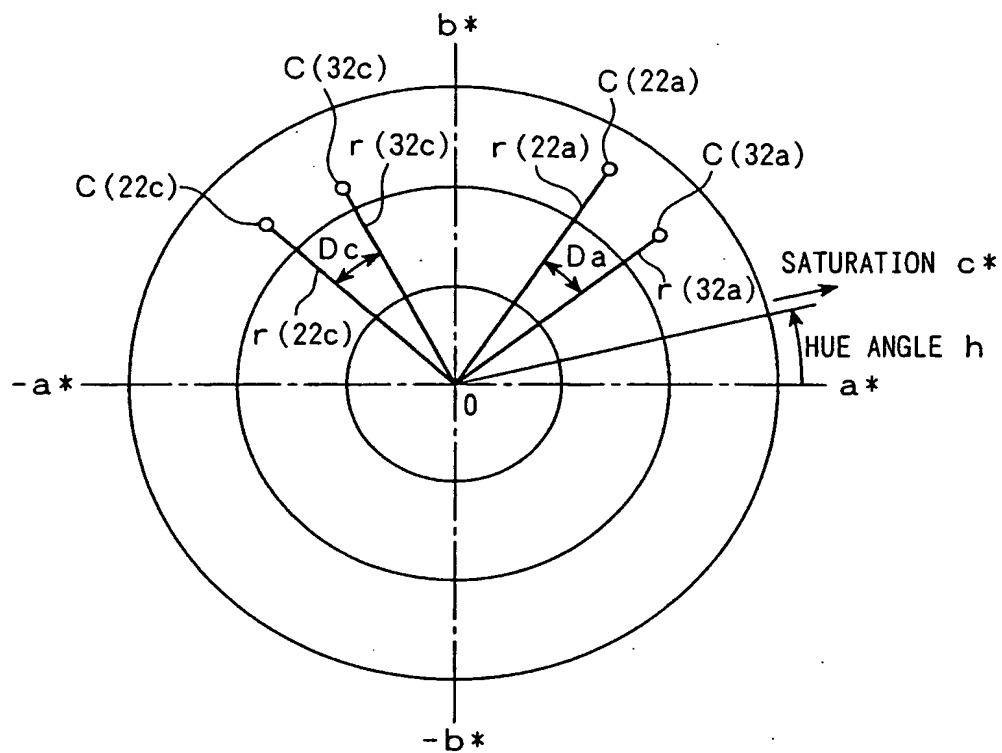
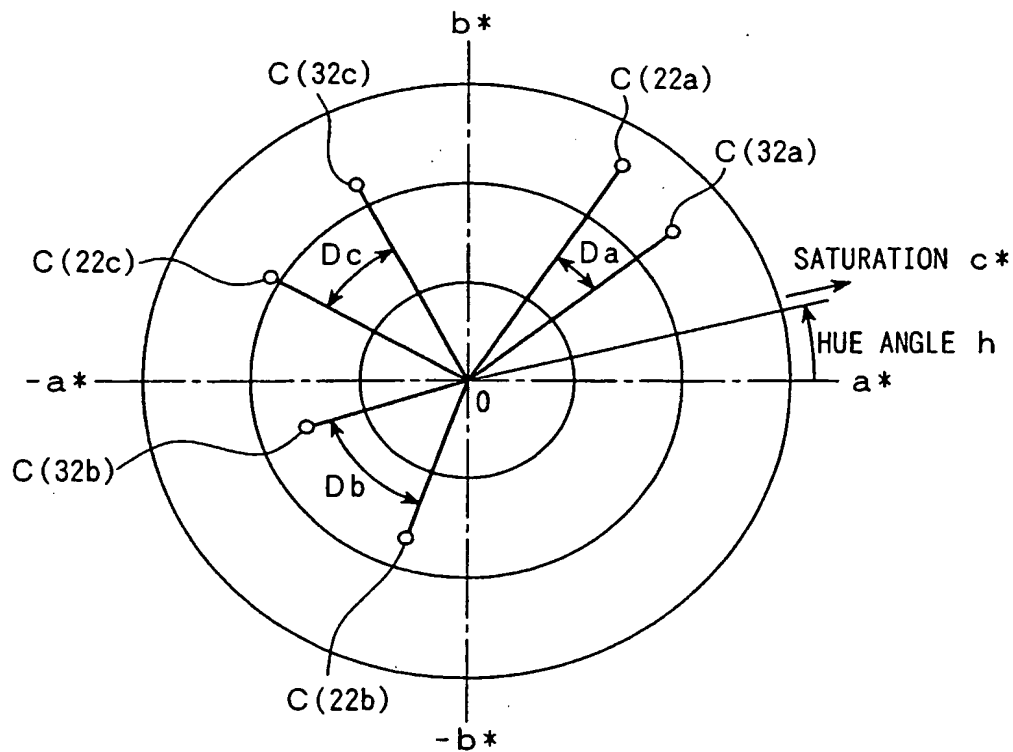
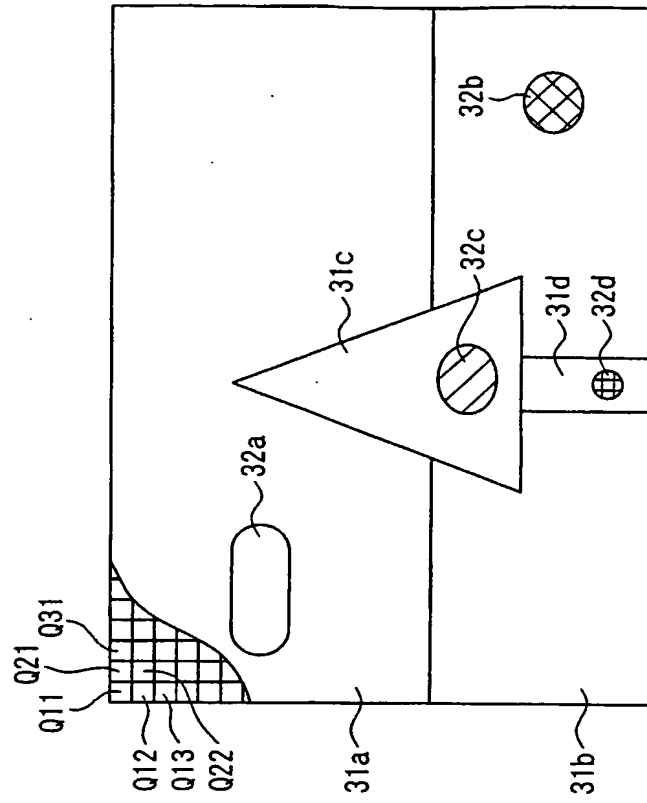


FIG. 8



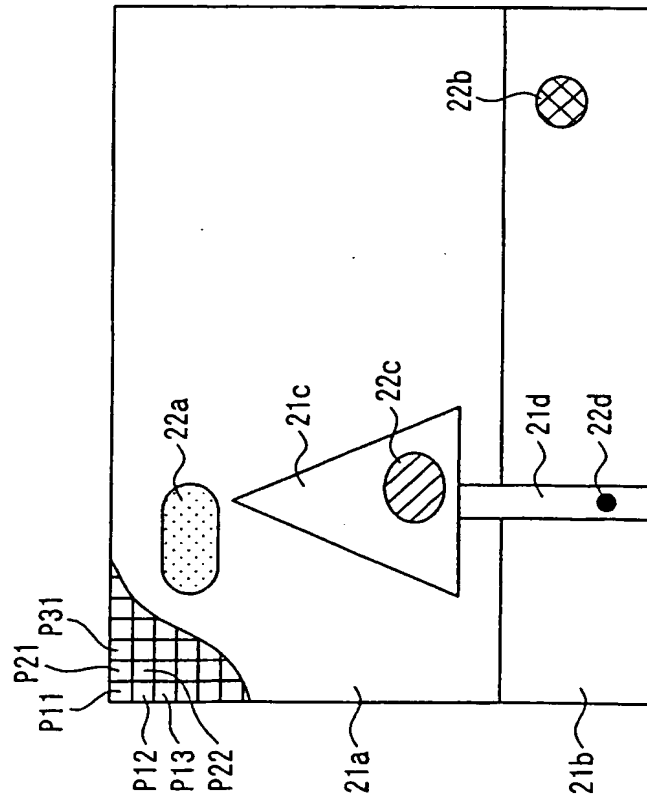
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FIG. 9B



SECOND IMAGE 30a

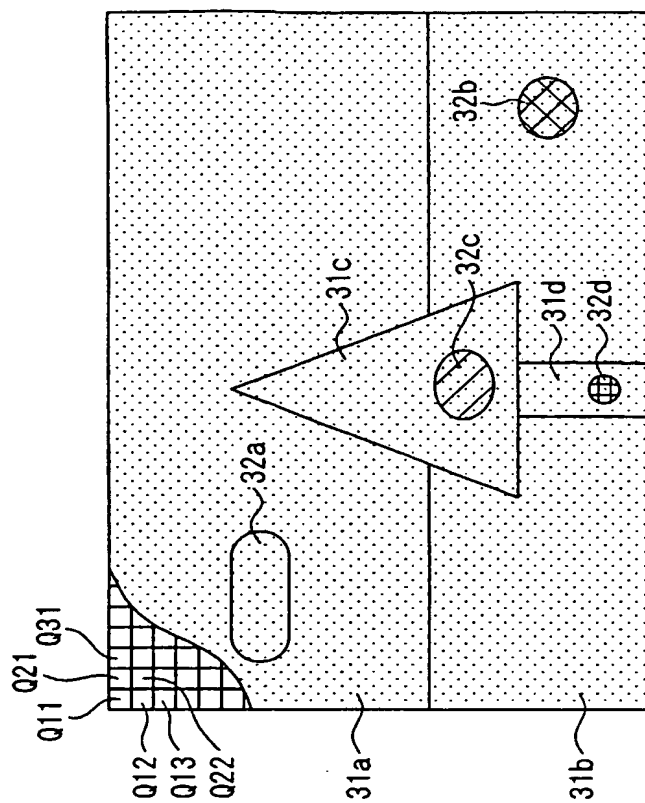
FIG. 9A



FIRST IMAGE 20a

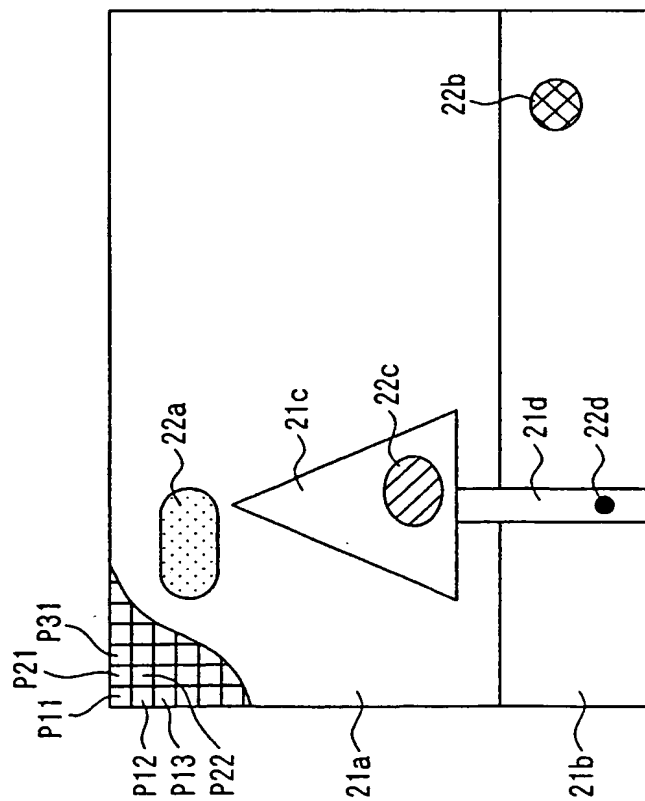
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FIG. 10B



SECOND IMAGE 30a

FIG. 10A



FIRST IMAGE 20a

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FIG. 11

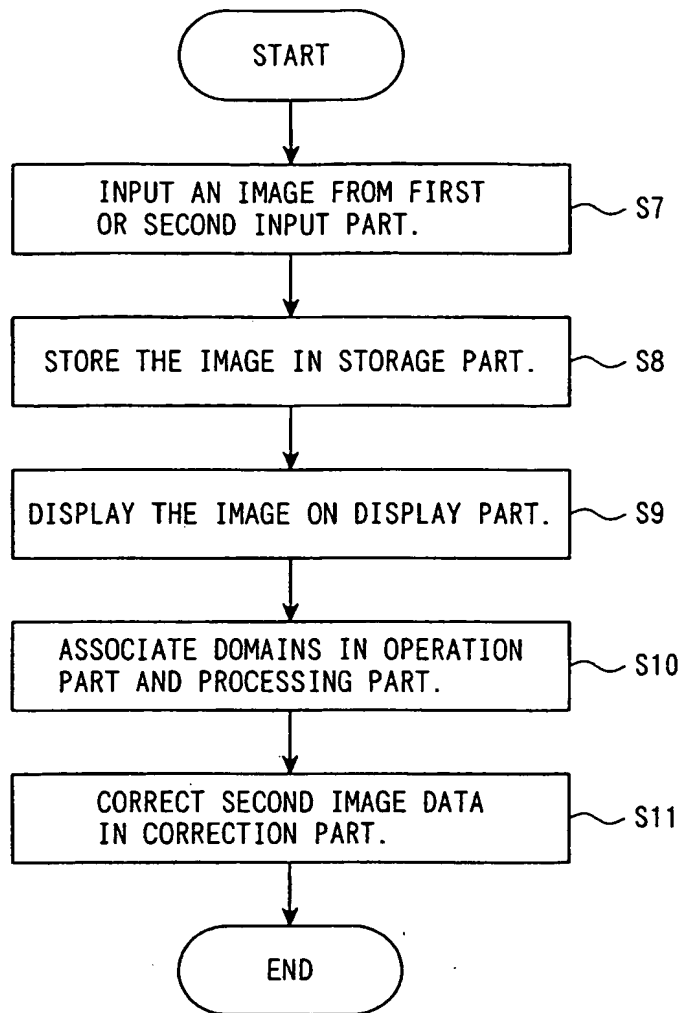
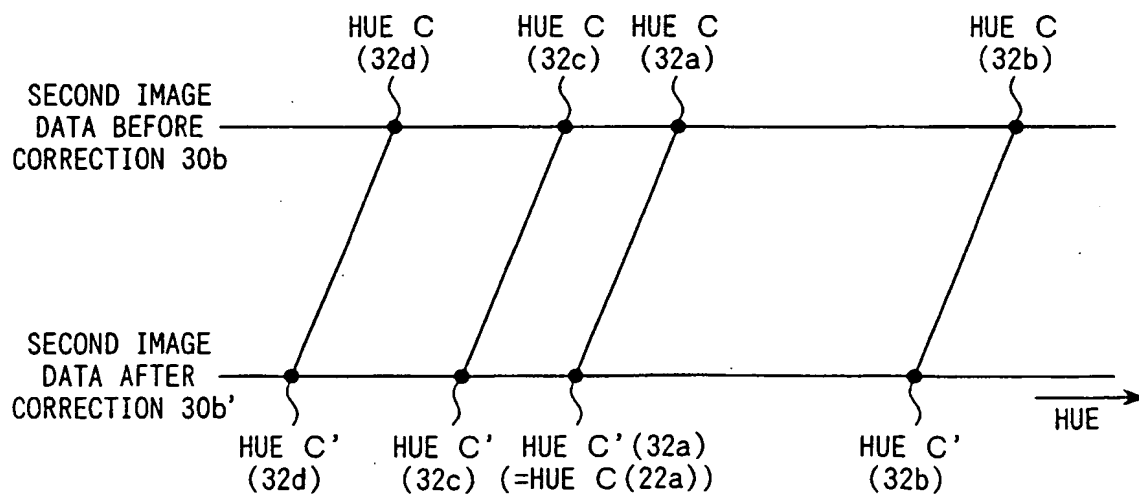


FIG. 12



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FIG. 13A

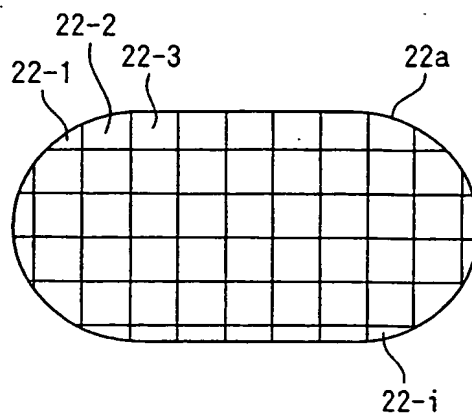


FIG. 13B

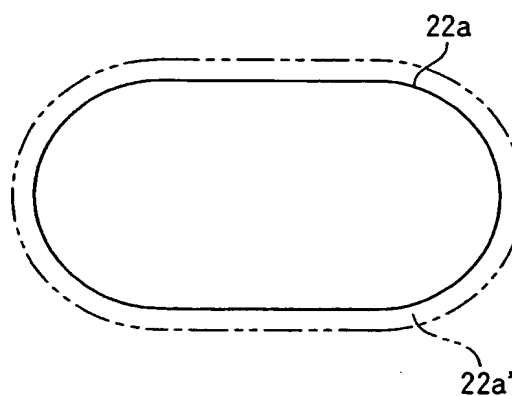
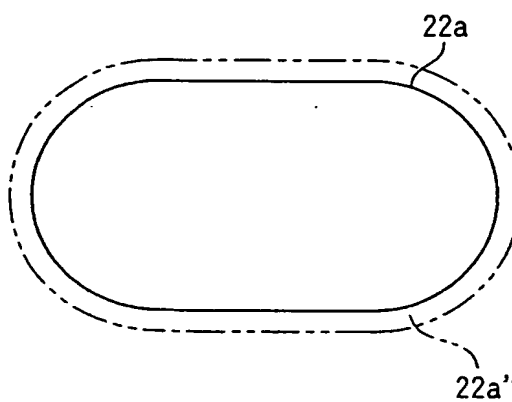
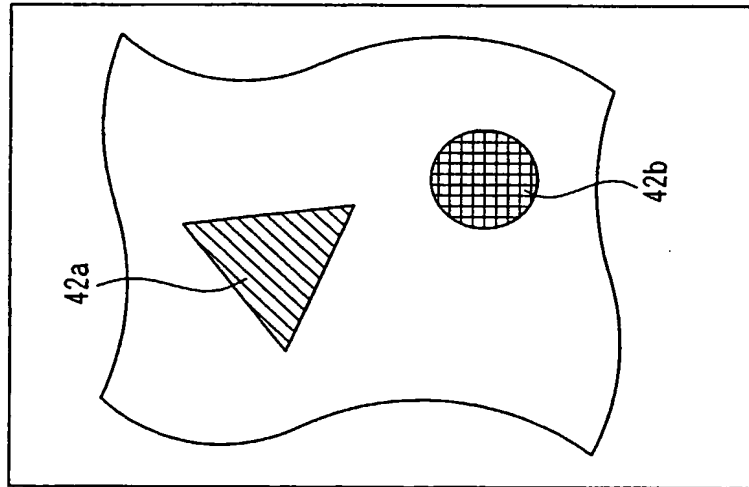


FIG. 13C



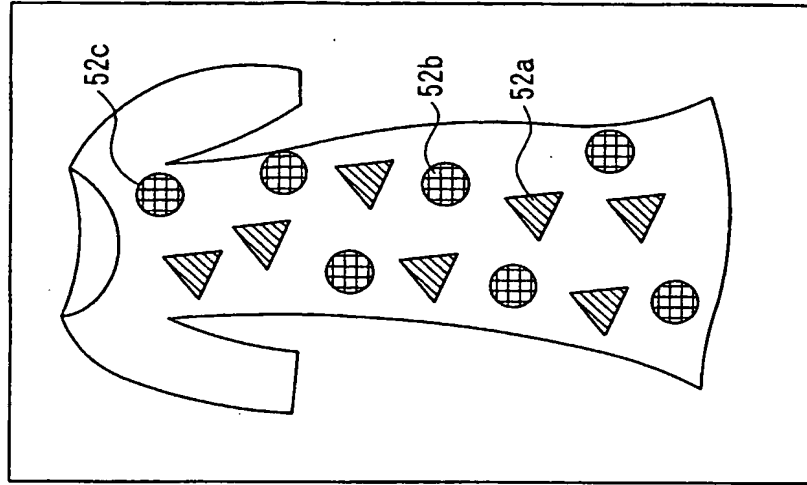
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FIG. 14A



FIRST IMAGE 40a

FIG. 14B



SECOND IMAGE 50a

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FIG. 15

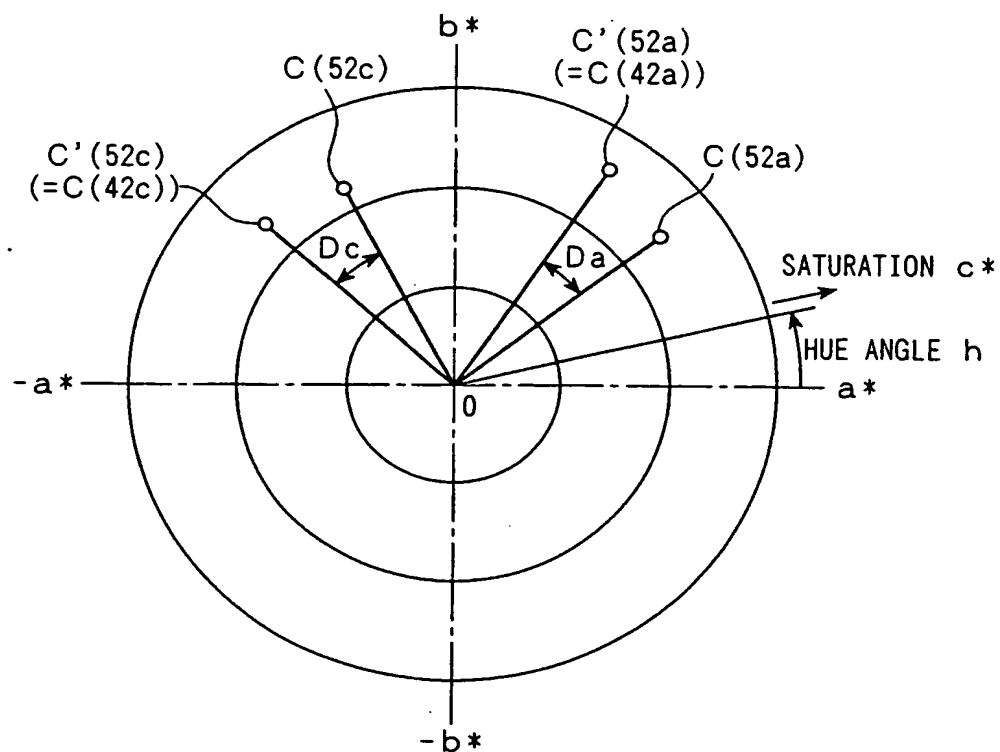


FIG. 16

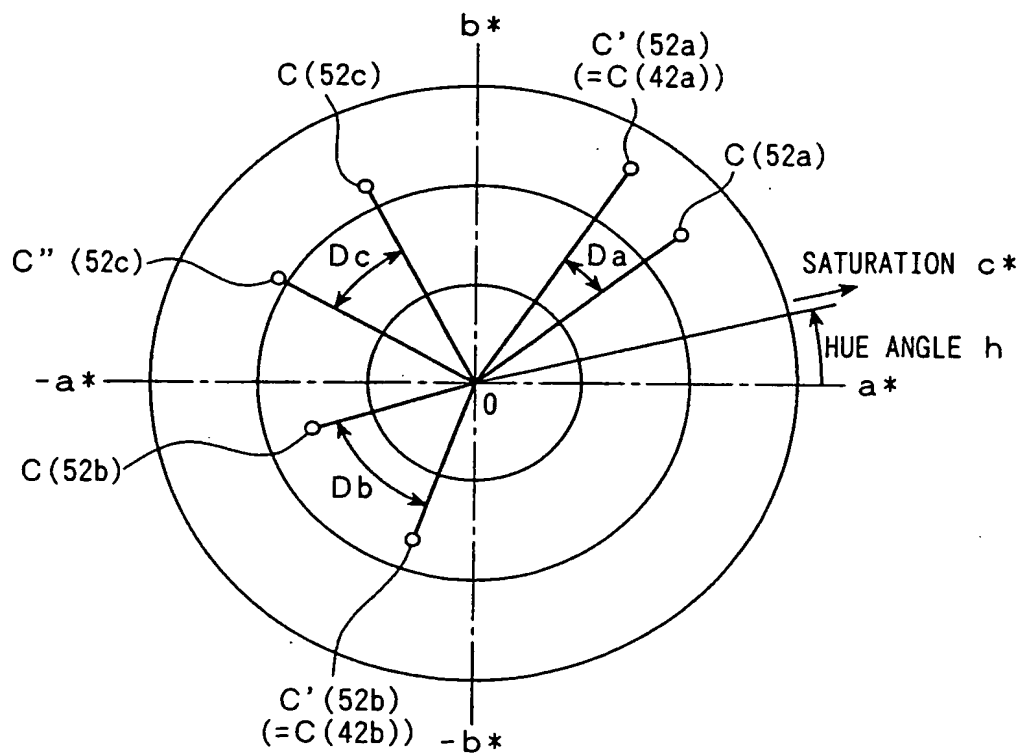


FIG. 17A

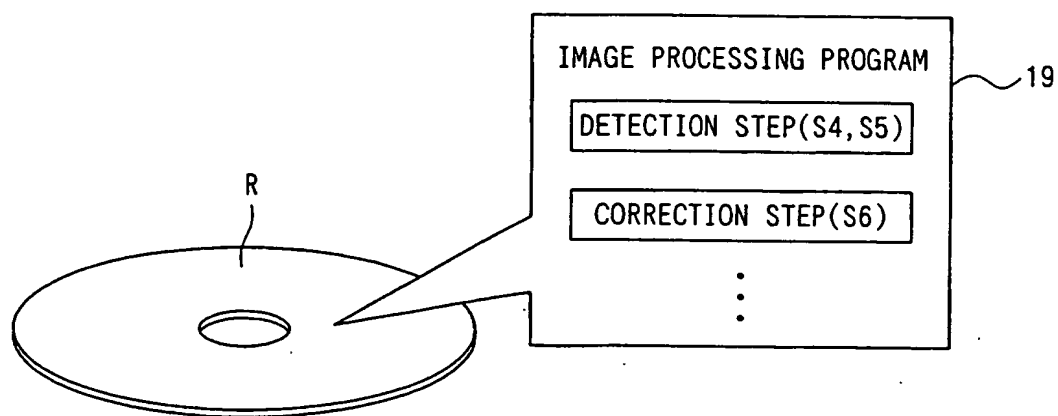
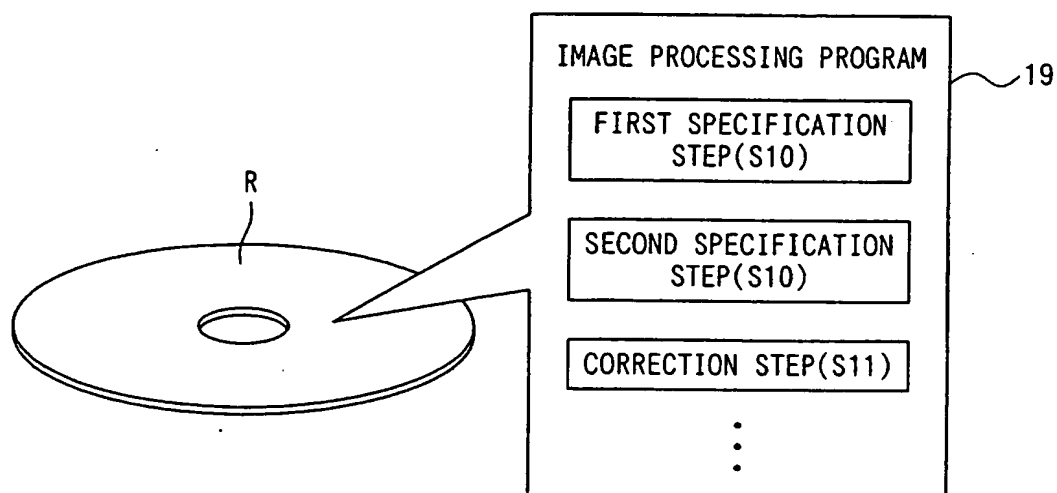


FIG. 17B



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2005/008824

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int.Cl.⁷ H04N1/46, G06T1/00, H04N1/60

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

Int.Cl.⁷ H04N1/46, G06T1/00, H04N1/60

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Published examined utility model applications of Japan 1922-1996
 Published unexamined utility model applications of Japan 1971-2005
 Registered utility model specifications of Japan 1996-2005
 Published registered utility model applications of Japan 1994-2005

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	JP 2002-290758 A (Minolta Co., Ltd), 2002.10.4, [0049] - [0053], Fig.11-12 (Family:none)	1, 7-9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18
Y		2-6, 10, 13, 16
A		19-34
Y	JP 2000-13628 A (Ricoh system kaihatsu Co., Ltd), 2000.1.14, Claim 7, (Family : none)	2-6, 10, 13, 16
A		19-34
X	JP 9-186907 A (Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd), 1997.7.15, [0045] - [0049] & US 6108441 A	19-22, 29-34

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.☐ See patent family annex.

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"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

29.07.2005

Date of mailing of the international search report

23.08.2005

Name and mailing address of the ISA/JP

Japan Patent Office

3-4-3, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-8915, Japan

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INTERNATIONALSEARCHREPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2005/008824

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A		1-18, 23-28

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